

NEWS

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A newsletter designed to inform, assist, and engage the public.

Commonwealth Transportation Board Adjusts Location of I-73 in Franklin, Henry Counties

During its monthly meeting on June 21 in Richmond, the Commonwealth Transportation Board adjusted the location for Interstate 73 in southern Franklin County and Henry County by choosing a more easterly route. The vote to move the location was unanimous.

Members of the board first rescinded their May 17, 2001, location decision and then approved a new resolution indicating that I-73 would follow the most eastern alignment south and east of Sydnorsville, as shown to citizens during last December's public hearings.

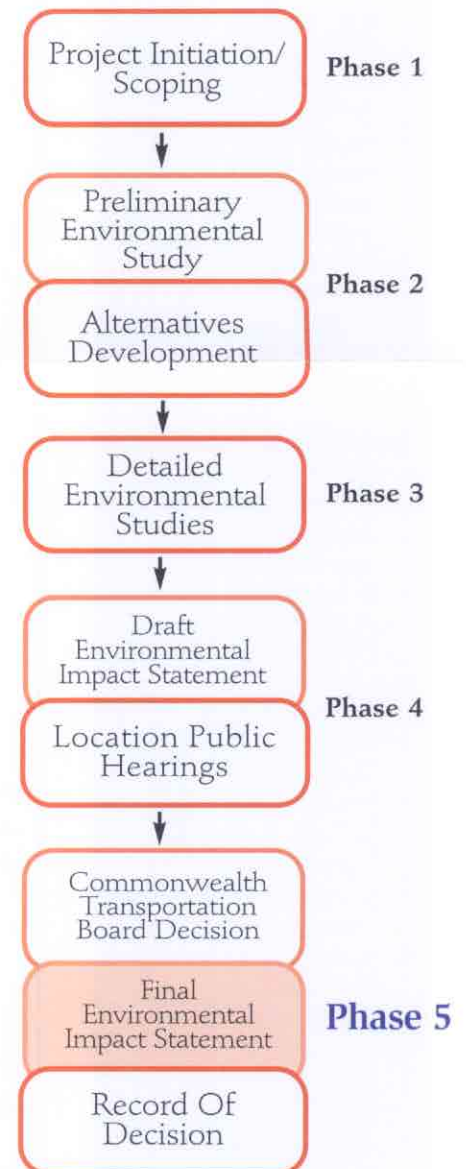
Specifically, the location for I-73 now follows these segments: 153 through Franklin County (unchanged) to segment 202A east of Sydnorsville, 385 near Fork Mountain, 369 across the Franklin County line, 373 east of Laurel Park (unchanged), 333 east of Carlisle and continuing south to 398, which crosses the North Carolina line along existing Route 220.

Board members indicated that the new location is a better choice for Henry County, as it reduces environmental impact and provides an easier project to design and build. The approved location affects only nine acres of wetlands, instead of 20, making the permitting process easier. Also, the new roadway will no longer be located on major portions of routes 220 and 58 bypass, thereby removing through traffic from local traffic and enhancing the safety of existing Route 220. Another factor in the decision was the importance of keeping traffic moving while construction is under way; that goal would have been more difficult to achieve if the location included large sections of Route 220.

The new location meets the purpose and need of the I-73 Location Study, undertaken by the Virginia Department of Transportation. Needs include improving system linkage and intermodal connections, as well as improving corridor safety, mobility and capacity. Another need for the road notes the potential for enhancing economic opportunities for attracting new industry and tourism, a factor also noted by the board.

Environmental data on the I-73 location is being completed by VDOT engineers, who will then forward a Final Environmental Impact Statement with specific information about the selected corridor to the Federal Highway Administration. Completion of the FEIS and approval by FHWA may take up to a year. Once FHWA issues its approval – called a Record of Decision – roadway design, right of way acquisition, and construction can begin.

Questions about the approved location for I-73 can be directed to VDOT's Salem District Office at (540) 387-5353. (TDD users, call 800-307-4630.) E-mail can be addressed to saleminfo@vdot.state.va.us. A Web site is available at www.vdot.state.va.us.



Now that the Commonwealth Transportation Board has approved a location for I-73, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will be developed with specific information about the selected corridor, along with an evaluation of all reasonable alternatives that have been considered. This FEIS also will respond to substantive comments received on the draft EIS, summarize public involvement, and describe mitigation measures that may be incorporated into the proposed action. The FEIS then will be forwarded to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for its consideration and/or approval, including a legal sufficiency review. Completing the FEIS and obtaining an approval by FHWA is expected to take about one year. Once FHWA approves the FEIS, a Record of Decision (ROD) is rendered by FHWA. The ROD will present the basis for the decision and it will summarize any mitigation measures that will be incorporated in the project, thereby clearing the path for final design, right of way acquisition and construction activities.

Selected corridor:

The approved location links the following segments, from north to south:

374, 376, 287A, 399, 400, 153, 202A, 385, 369, 373, 333, 398

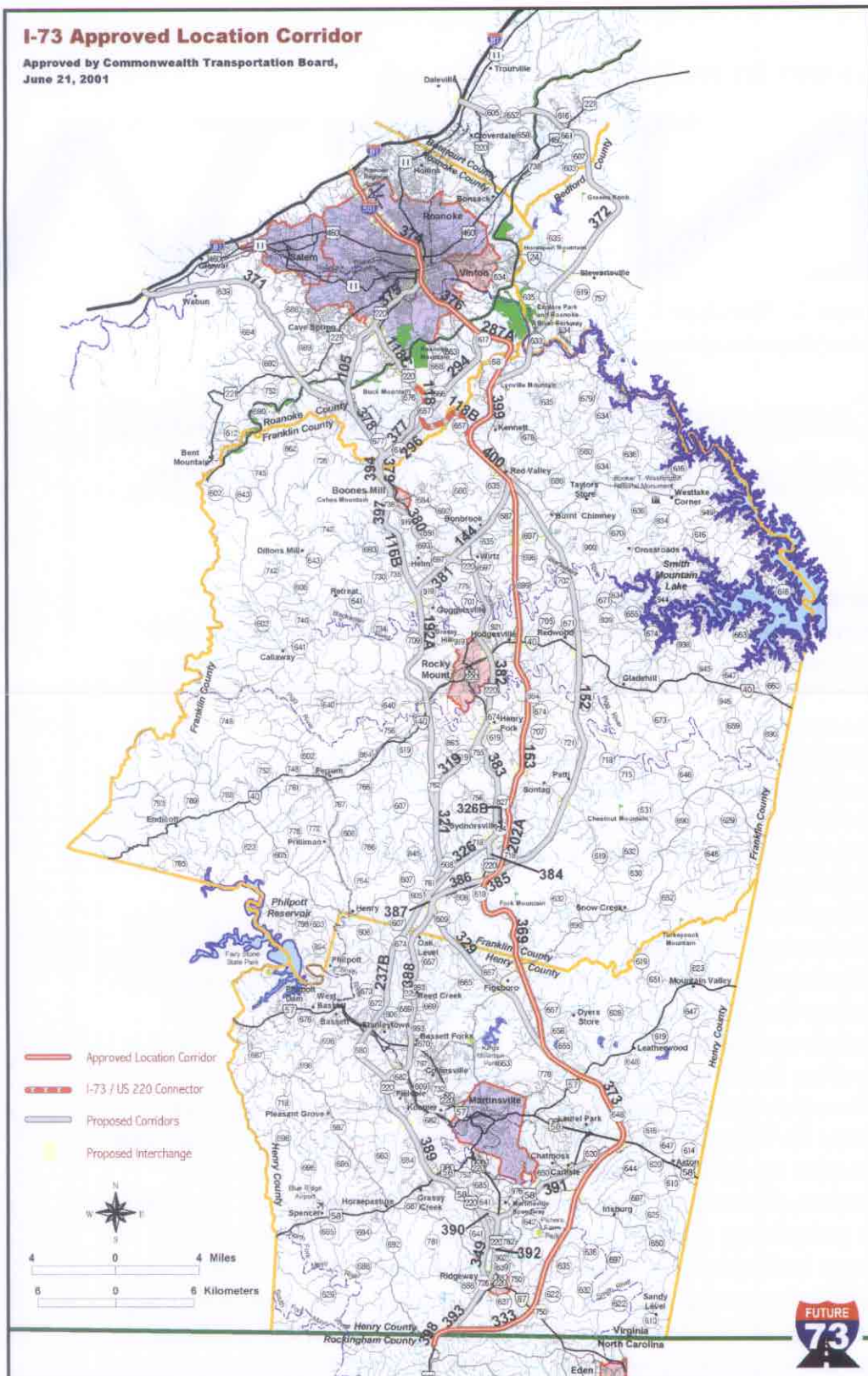
The approved location for I-73 also includes the construction of a connector road that would link I-73 with existing Route 220. The connector road would intersect existing Route 220 near the intersection of Route 668 east of Buck Mountain in Roanoke County. It would connect to I-73 in the vicinity of Route 657 west of Kennett in Franklin County. This connector road follows segments 118 and 118B, which are also depicted on the map to the right.

About the corridor:

- Length of corridor: 70.2 miles
- Construction cost: Approximately \$1.21 billion in today's dollars
- Estimated number of displacements: 366 homes
39 businesses
7 non-profit organizations

I-73 Approved Location Corridor

Approved by Commonwealth Transportation Board,
June 21, 2001



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